DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 210 964 HE 014 512

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TITLE Augmenting Classroom Experience.
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (August 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Advising; Clubs; *Curriculum Enrichment; *Departments; Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; Information Dissemination; *Occupational Information; Program Development; *Psychology; Scholarship; *Seminars; Speeches; *Student Development; Student Experience; Student Participation

ABSTRACT

Supplemental activities that can be provided by an academic department are examined. The development of a psychology departmental colloquium series, the formation of a psychology club, the supervision of a field placement course, and the participation of faculty in specialty advising for pre-law and pre-health science students are considered. The colloquium series is discussed in relation to initiating, coordinating, and maintaining such a program as well as the specific objectives developed for the model series. The following objectives guided the development of the series: to illustrate the variety of activities engaged in by psychologists, to provide a public forum for psychology faculty and students to present their scholarly work, and to stimulate additional scholarly activity among faculty and students. Topics addressed during the first four years of the series are listed. The psychology club is addressed from a social as well as an intellectual growth perspective. In addition to some social gatherings, the club has sponsored service functions (e.g., special events for hospitalized children), and has addressed the issue of learning more about the profession of psychology. The field placement course has required both classroom and on-site time. The way that this type of course can be integrated into the overall patterns of the department is considered. It is suggested that specialty advising can aid not only individual students but also can increase the effectiveness of the departmental advising process. Methods for maximizing this function are examined. (Author/SW)

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# Augmenting Classroom Experience

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HE 014 512

Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, August, 1981.

Augmenting Classroom Experience

The subject of this part of our symposium is some of the ways in which a department can supplement traditional classroom activities. The activities which I will address consist of the development of a colloquium series, the formation of a psychology club, the supervision of a field placement course, and the participation of psychology faculty in special advising.

Before describing how we have integrated these activities into the operation of our department I want to make a couple of "editorial" comments. Many of the activities which I will be describing are time consuming for both students and faculty. They are not the types of things which can just be added in a manner analogous to adding another course to your catalog. Thus, I believe that there must be a general departmental consensus that these activities will be given both departmental support and some degree of sharing of faculty responsibility for them. It can be too easy to just delegate such activities to "junior" faculty. The justification for this delegation may be that these "junior" faculty need such activities in order to progress through the "rank and tenure" system. Unfortunately, many "junior" faculty just don't have the knowledge of the system and ways of coping with the range of problems which can arise in these programs which would be possessed by a more senior faculty member. Another point to keep in mind as you decide whether or not any of these programs might be amenable to your individual departments is whether or not your students would be willing to take an active role in them. As faculty members, we are coming from a certain position of authority

with our students. Although that position is appropriate for many classroom situations, it may not be the best approach for some adjunct activities. These activities are supposed to be for the benefit of the students, not necessarily for the gratification of the faculty. At times, we can get so wrapped up in what we truly believe will benefit our students that we miss the point that they just aren't interested in it.

The first of our adjunct activities I will address is our departmental colloquium series. This series is currently moving into its fifth year. At a departmental meeting about 4½ years ago, we were discussing ways in which we might augment the traditional academic experiences offered in our department. One suggestion which was raised was a colloquium series. We had some misgivings about developing such a series in a department which offers only an undergraduate degree. Would our students attend presentations without the pressure to do so which is inherent in graduate departments? How would we divide the responsibility for developing such a series and where would we find the speakers? After some discussion, it was decided that it would be best if two faculty members initially took the responsibility for developing the series. To get a balance between experience and "fresh" outlooks, we agreed to have one "senior" and one "junior" faculty member undertake this project.

During the planning stage, these two faculty members discussed and identified issues which they felt would influence the implementation of the proposed series. They felt that it was best to start by identifying objectives for the series. Based on our specific

department, the following objectives guided the development of the series: (a) to illustrate the variety of activities engaged in by psychologists; (b) to provide a public forum for psychology faculty and students to present their scholarly work; (c) to stimulate additional scholarly activity among faculty and students.

With these objectives in mind, methods of implementation were then considered. It was decided that it would be rather easy for the faculty developing the series to become too enthusiastic about it. They needed to temper their enthusiasm with the realities of peoples' schedules. Enough speakers to stimulate but not satiate the proposed audience were needed! The final schedule was for three speakers during the Fall semester and another three for the Spring semester.

The next issue was where to find these speakers. Did we want to use faculty from our own department or from the outside? As a compromise, we decided to use a 50-50 mixture on an alternating month basis. Although we also wanted students to be an active part of the colloquium program, we did not schedule any student presentations for the first year of the series. We felt that once they became accustomed to the colloquium series they would have more interest in participating.

With only mild "arm twisting," we were able to convinve three of our own faculty to make presentations during the first year. The question of participation from outside the university was one of major concern to us. We had no financial support for this program. Thus, we were looking for professionals who would be willing to donate their time to talk to a group of undergraduates. We had no idea of what size audience we would have. Thus, we had little to offer a potential speaker.

We were pleasantly surprised by the attitude of professionals within our community. During our first four years, we were never refused by a guest we invited to speak. Although we were not always acquainted personally with the speaker , we found that a willingness on our part to call a stranger and explain our situation resulted in an affirmative response.

The first four years of the series have included presentations on a variety of topics. Year one included career development, the role of the paraprofessional in a mental health setting, animal research on learned helplessness, industrial-organizational psychology, a history of our own psychology department, and the training of a psychologist outside a traditional psychology department (actually in a department of human development). The second year included the professions of school psychology, counseling psychology, social work, human services, and pediatric psychology. Student presentations were also begun the second year. The students were encouraged to submit their class research. These submissions were judged by the two faculty members who had developed the colloquium series and several were chosen for presentation at the final program of the year. Certificates of merit were presented to each of these students who presented material.

The third year of the series included presentations on neuropsychology, a history of psychology in the United States, issues for expectant fathers, self-perception theory and weight loss, and children's social interactions with non-related adults. As in the previous year, the final program of the year was student presentations. The third year of the series also brought our first attempt to invite a speaker from outside the immediate Omaha area. With the help of a university

speaker fund, we were able to bring Dr. Virginia Sexton to our campus to talk about American psychology's history. This presentation was scheduled in the evening and invitations were sent to local psychologists as part of our celebration of psychology's centennial.

By the end of the third year of the series, we began to wonder if the series was being molded too much by the personalities of the two faculty who had developed it. However, much had been learned by that time about the pitfalls of scheduling, program printing, and so on. Thus, we had some concern about just asking two different faculty members to take over the project. We decided that the "senior" faculty member would "step down" from the position of colloquium co-director while the "junior" member would take an additional year on the series with a new co-director. In this way, a more staggered progression through our faculty could be established. During the fourth year of the series, we continued our attempt to have one speaker from outside the general community. Although we still did not have funding, we began to explore our range of friends. We discovered that a friend might be willing to come for a visit, stay with one of us, and do so for "gas" money. Our dean was willing to provide that minimal compensation and thus we were ready for year four. That year included presentations on controlled drinking as a way to deal with alcohol abuse, dual-career couples, mid-life crisis, methodological problems in sex research, and the insanity defense, in addition to the student presentations.

As we move into our fifth year, the second of the original co-directors has moved out of the series. The colloquium program, however,

continues. We will be having a speaker from outside our area as a result of a national speaker program. These speakers come for "expenses" to schools within their general geographic region. Since our speaker will be dealing with the topic of juries, the program will be sponsored jointly by our department and the law school.

To facilitate faculty-student interaction, we have a social component as part of the colloquium program. The formal presentation is scheduled for one hour with about a half hour of refreshments after it. The students are encouraged to attend the social portion to meet the speaker and talk to the faculty.

Attendance at the colloquia has varied with the topics and time of the semester. For some presentations, there have been less than 10 students in attendance while for others there have been over 50. Some faculty members have given extra class credit for attending, and reporting on, colloquia relevant to their class. These presentations have been among the best attended!

During the first several years of the series, we conducted a formal evaluation of the program. Attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire following each program. The response was quite favorable with those speakers from outside the department tending to have a slightly better rating than those with whom the students are more familiar. Faculty attendance from the psychology department was about 85% during the first two years and has dwindled somewhat since that time. Overall, we have been pleased with this addition to our department's offerings and plan to continue it.

The formation of the psychology club began at about the same time as the colloquium series. There had been such a club in prior years

but it had died from lack of interest. Periodically, a student would suggest such a club but there was no organized effort toward that end. As we, the faculty, discussed the possibility of a psychology club we had some strong concerns about the club being for the students. If such a club should be formed, it would be important for the faculty sponsor to keep a "low profile." Even if some of the initial ideas did come from the faculty, they would need to be presented by a student to the other students.

Our department has a system of teaching assistants who help with certain large classes. The faculty member who agreed to try to get the psychology club started thus tested the idea with her teaching assistant. He liked the idea and became the student instigator. An initial meeting was scheduled by this student as a gathering to discuss the formation of a psychology club. The faculty member's role involved gathering information about university regulations regarding student organizations. The students then took the responsibility for following through on this information. The faculty member helped the students write a constitution and by-laws for the group.

As the club evolved, questions arose about its purpose. Should it be solely a "social" organization or should there be a "service" component to it? While activities have varied over the years, a continuing theme has been to provide a setting in which psychology students, especially majors, can become acquainted with each other. Thus, some of the club's business meetings have been followed by a refreshment period. Each year the club has sponsored a Christmas party. Many of these parties have been held at the home of our of our faculty. Last year, they held a

caroling prior to refreshments. The Spring initiation has traditionally been a picnic.

In the area of service, the members of the club have often staged special events for hospitalized children. The students have taken the initiative in this area. They have contacted the appropriate hospital personnel to arrange the time and learn about any special limitations which may exist. Over the years, they have scheduled Halloween and Easter parties on both pediatric wards and children's psychiatric wards. The students wear costumes for these events and arrange a variety of games appropriate to the age of the children. The feedback which our department has received from personnel of these hospitals has been most positive.

At times, the club members have also addressed the issue of learning more about the profession of psychology. They have suggested field trips but these have been among their least succesful ventures. Through fund raisers as well as an allocation of some university funds and minimal dues, they have been able to provide "gas" money to those students who have attended state association meetings as well as to a couple of students who presented papers at a regional psychological association convention.

Once the club became an ongoing organization, the question of affiliation with Psi Chi was raised. Since the original faculty sponsor was a member of Psi Chi, she agreed to gather the material needed for the group to affiliate with the national honor society. That charter was granted at the end of the second year of the club's existence.

A question was raised about the club once Psi Chi had been added. Were there really enough students to support two separate organizations?

What would happen to those students who did not have the academic qualifications to become members of Psi Chi? As these issues were discussed, the students decided that they did not want to make the Psi Chi members into an elitist group within the department. Thus, these two groups would meet as one oeganization. Only those students who had been initiated into Psi Chi would qualify to serve as officers (in accordance with the Psi Chi cahrter) but programs would be jointly sponsored by Psi Chi and the Psychology Club. That relationship has worked well for our students.

As with the colloquium series, the Psychology Club took faculty time. The faculty sponsor attended all of their meetings as well as being involved in executive committee meetings and planning sessions. After three years, it thus seemed time to pass the role of sponsor to another faculty member. The club's constitution and by-laws contain the provision that the psychology department chairman will appoint the faculty sponsor for a term of one year with reappointment possible. The chairman has been attentive to student feedback as well as faculty time demands in making these appointments. If the club is to remain an ongoing and strong group, the faculty sponsor will be an important person. This sponsor must enjoy working closely with students on non-academic matters and be willing to devote considerable time to that activity.

A third adjunct activity which provides variety in our department is our field placement course. In recent years, there have been articles in Teaching of Psychology on these programs as well as programs

at both APA and regional conventions. Thus, many of the issues surroundong such programs have already been addressed. What I will try to do today is to show how this type of course can fit into the overall pattern of an integrated department.

Our program is directed by one faculty member who has this course as part of her regular teaching load. It is offered each semester and has enrollment limited to 15 students. Although most of our course enrollments are considerably higher than 15, there do not tend to be 15 students who apply for and actually enroll in this course. Such a course seems to attract only certain types of student. What types of students they are is a matter of current research concern to us.

Although one faculty member is primarily responsible for this course, the nature of this offering has led it to be one in which other faculty become involved as well. Enrollment is by instructor consent. Thus each student who wishes to take the class must schedule an interview with the professor prior to the pre-registration period. If the student appears to be appropriate for the class, a note is then sent to that student's advisor indicating that if the advisor agrees the student may pre-register for the field placement course. It is important for the student's advisor to know that this course is not one which is out of the control of the individual advisor. If there are reasons the advisor feels the student is inappropriate for a field placement, the course director wants open lines of communication so that this information is known prior to any potential placement.

Some faculty have provided names of potential new placements to the course director. In other cases, they have directed community

professionals to the course director so that potential placements might be discussed. When new placements arise, they are often discussed over lunch within the department. In this way, the faculty as a whole are familiar with the types of experiences which are available and can direct appropriate advisees to the program and point others in a different direction. While the major responsibility for this type of course may rest with one person, the entire department has an impact on its success.

A final issue for my presentation is the involvement of psychology faculty in specialty advising. Our university has a program of advising for those students who are interested in pursuing careers in various professions. Specifically, we have a pre-health sciences advisory committee and a pre-law advisory committee. Each of these committees is limited in composition to a small number of faculty. Students utilize the special advisors in addition to their major professors. Within our department (now composed of 10 full-time members), we have a member of each of these committees. These advisors are able to provide information to the faculty within the department about the possibilities available in their respective areas. Psychology is the type of major which can lead to the pursuit of a variety of careers following receipt of the baccalaureate degree. While we all have had experience with the process of applying to graduate school in psychology, we tend to be less familiar with the requirements of these other professional schools. Although we can learn what totals on the LSAT, DAT, and MCAT are appropriate for certain schools, that is only the most basic level of advising. When we have questions

about any of these professions, we have someone who is close to us who can either talk to our advisee or provide us with needed information.

Perhaps this type of information is important to us because we are not only a psychology department which is there to teach our subject matter but also one which is oriented toward helping our students to find appropriate outlets for their talents. Our final presentation today will address other ways in which we attempt to reach that goal.